Interim Report of National Commission on Farmers

†*254. SHRI SHARAD ANANTRAO JOSHI: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the National Commission on Farmers was appointed under the Chairmanship of Dr. M.S. Swaminathan to study the situation regarding the lifestyles of farmers in India;

(b) whether the Commission has submitted any interim report or made any interim recommendations;

(c) whether Government have accepted such interim report or recommendations;

(d) if so, the stage of implementation of these recommendations; and

(e) whether Government, in view of the experience gained, propose to make any changes in the constitution of the Commission?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) to (e) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House

Statement

(a) to (d) The National Commission on Farmers was reconstituted under the Chairmanship of Dr. M.S. Swaminathan. The revised Terms of Reference of the Commission are given below:

- Work out a comprehensive medium-term strategy for food and nutrition security in the country in order to move towards the goal of universal food security over time.
- Propose methods of enhancing the productivity, profitability, stability and sustainability of the major farming systems of the country based on an agro-ecological and agro-climatic approach and the harnessing of frontier technologies.
- Bring about synergy between technology and public policy and recommend measures for enhancing income and employment potential in rural areas through diversification, application of appropriate technology including IT for information on market, weather, credit facilities and e-commerce, training and market reforms.

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†Starred Question Nos. 243 and 254 were taken together.

- Suggest measures to attract and retain educated youth in farming and recommend for this purpose methods of technological upgrading of crop husbandry, horticulture, animal husbandry, fisheries (inland and marine), agro-forestry and agro-processing and associated marketing infrastructure.
- Suggest comprehensive policy reforms designed to enhance investment in agri-research, substantially increase flow of rural credit to farmers including small and marginal, triggering agricultural growth led economic progress, which can lead to opportunities for a healthy and productive life to rural families.
- Formulate special programmes for dryland farming for farmers in the arid and semi-arid regions, as well as for farmers in hilly and coastal areas in order to link the livelihood security of the farming communities living in such areas with the ecological security of such regions. Review in this context all ongoing Technology Missions like those relating to pulses, oilseeds, maize, cotton, watershed etc. and recommend methods of promoting horizontal integration of vertically structured programmes. Also, suggest credit-linked insurance schemes, which can protect resource poor farm families from unbearable risks. Further, suggest methods of strengthening and streamling the National Horticulture Development Board.
- Suggest measures for enhancing the quality and cost competitiveness of farm commodities so as to make them globally competitive through providing necessary facilities and application of frontier sciences and promote quality literacy for codex alimentarius standard, sanitary and phyto-sanitary measures among farmers through reorienting and retooling extension machinery. Also, suggest methods of providing adequate protection to farmers from imports, when international prices fall sharply.
- Recommend measures for the credit, knowledge, skill, technological and marketing empowerment of women taking into consideration the increasing feminization of agriculture and the proposed conferment of right to land ownership.
- Suggest methods of empowering male and female members of elected local bodies to discharge effectively their role in conserving and improving the ecological foundations for sustainable

agriculture, like land, water, agro-biodiversity and the atmosphere, with priority attention to irrigation water.

- Consider any other issue, which is relevant to the above, or is specially referred to the Commission by Government.

The Commission has submitted its first interim report. The Government of India has already taken a number of steps to address priority issues highlighted in the report. Rural indebtedness, which is one of the primary factors behind the distress of farmers has been addressed by raising the volume of rural credit by 30 per cent during 2004-05. Rescheduling of loans, one time settlement have been the other interventions in this regard. The National Agriculture Insurance Scheme is being strengthened and made multi-pronged so as to provide an optimized safety net to farmers. Dryland farming has been identified as a key intervention in the Annual Plan of the Department of Agriculture for which 200 crores is being provided. For micro-irrigation, which will further optimize the benefits of dryland farming another 400 crores has been provided. Rs. 630 crores is being provided for the National Horticulture Mission which will raise incomes, provide employment and help improve nutritional status in the rural areas which cumulatively will help ameliorate distress and promote welfare of farmers.

The issues concerning creation of legal rights for women in land and mainstreaming gender concern in agriculture is receiving Government's attention. The Union Budget has already mentioned measures to be taken for strengthening the ICDS programme and further enhancement of the nutritional and food security network are among Government's top most priority efforts.

The Ministry of Agriculture has taken on board the involvement of Panchayati Raj institutions in its initiatives to the extent possible. There is a provision for involvement of panchayat members in Watershed Committees. In many of the ATMA (Agricultural Technology Management Agency) districts, members of panchayats are involved in field extension activities.

(e) No changes are contemplated at present.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Next question. (*Interruptions*) Let him speak.

SHRI SHARAD PAWAR: Sir, question No. 243 is very similar to question No. 254, put by hon. Member, Shri Sharad Joshi. I don't mind to discuss

both the questions simultaneously. These are exactly on the same subject. We can club both the questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY: Sir, the farmers are committing suicides in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Punjab, and many other States. The distress among farmers is a matter of great concern. Dr. Swaminathan Commission has submitted its report. I would like to know what steps have been taken on the recommendations of the Commission. How the problems are going to be solved? Can I expect some concrete steps from the hon. Minister so that there are no suicides by the farmers in future?

SHRI SHARAD PAWAR: Dr. Swaminathan has submitted only the interim report. His final report has not reached yet. But certain suggestions have been made by him, and concrete steps have also been taken. The main issue raised by him was regarding credit. The House is fully aware that substantial actions have been taken to provide additional credit — in fact, right from Rs. 80,000 crores to Rs. 1,03,000 crores. That has been practically implemented. The hon. Finance Minister, in his Budget Speech, has also said that this year the credit would go to somewhat Rs. 1,08,000 crores. This is a 30 per cent hike in providing credit. That itself is a major decision that has been taken.

In the interim report many other issues were raised, mainly about micro-irrigation, dry-land farming and horticulture. In all these areas, substantial money has been provided. For horticulture mission, Rs. 630 crore has been provided; for micro-irrigation, Rs. 400 crore has been provided; and for dry-land farming, Rs. 200 crore has been provided. So, this is only an interim report. Certain actions have been taken on the basis of that. We are waiting for the final report.

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY: Sir, my second supplementary is this. Is it not a fact that the Commission's fourth focal theme is Panchayati Raj institutions? In such case, there are four focal points, namely, integrated pest management, water management, crop rotation and post-harvest operations. So, I would like to know from the hon. Minister as to what recommendations are made by the Commission regarding these four points, *i.e.* integrated pest management, water management, crop rotation and post-harvest operations.

SHRI SHARAD PAWAR: Sir, some recommendations have been made, but details on all these issues have not reached yet.

SHRI SHARAD ANANTRAO JOSHI: Sir, I am grateful to the Minister for Agriculture for the steps he has indicated on supplying additional credit. The problem of credit arises due to the fact that for decades agriculture has been a losing proposition and the proof of that has been that according to the W.T.O., in 1997-98, the negative A.M.S. was to the extent of eighty-three per cent. I would like to ask the Minister what is the current rate of negative A.M.S. in India.

SHRI SHARAD PAWAR: Sir, I have not got these figures with me right now, but I will definitely collect and supply it to the hon. Member.

SHRI SHARAD ANANTRAO JOSHI: When is the final report expected?

SHRI SHARAD PAWAR: Sir, I must say that Dr. Swaminathan has practically submitted his interim report within thirty days. So, he has not taken much time. Within thirty days, he has given his first interim report and now, as per the information I have got, it will take another two months' time to get a final report.

श्री विक्रम वर्मा: माननीय सभापति जी, माननीय मंत्री जी ने यह कहा है कि 2005 के दौरान कृषि ऋण की मात्रा 30 प्रतिशत बढ़ाकर किसानों की ओर, ग्रामीण ऋण-ग्रस्तता की ओर ध्यान दिया गया है। प्रॉब्लम यह है कि ऋण-ग्रस्तता बढ़ती जा रही है। ऋण-ग्रस्तता 30 प्रतिशत हम और बढ़ाएं, किसानों को सुविधा मिलनी चाहिए, वहां तक ठीक है, लेकिन चूंकि ब्याज की दरें इतनी अधिक होती हैं और कोऑपरेटिव्स में जब जाते हैं तो प्राइमरी सोसायटी तक जाते-जाते वह 18 परसेंट तक हो जाती हैं। ऋण-ग्रस्तता तब कम होगी या उसके कारण किसानों को फसल लाभ तब हो पाएगा, जब ब्याज दरें कम की जाएं। तो क्या सरकार इस सम्बन्ध में कुछ विचार करने जा रही है कि हम ब्याज दरों में कमी करें? इसके साथ ही आपने राष्ट्रीयकृत बीमा के बारे में जो बताया है, उसे बहुकोणीय बनाने के संबंध में आपने इसमें उल्लेख जरूर किया है, लेकिन अभी काऑपरेटिव सोसायटीज का बीमा अलग तरीके से होता है, कॅमर्शियल बैंक्स अलग करते हैं और कभी-कभी ब्लॉक लेवेल पर आंकलन किया जाता है। इसमें किसान को वास्तविक लाभ नहीं मिल पाता क्योंकि उतने परसेंटेज में और जब एक साथ किया जाता है तो वे पूरे ब्लॉक की हानि नहीं दर्शा पाते हैं। इन सब कारणों से किसान को अपने बीमे का लाभ नहीं मिल पाता है। तो मेरा सीधा प्रश्न यह है कि क्या सरकार कोई एकीकृत, इस प्रकार की बीमा संबंधी नीति बनाने जा रही है, जिसमें खरीफ की फसलों को वर्गीकृत किया जाए, रबी की फसलों को वर्गीकृत किया जाय और लोन के समय ही बीमित कर लिया जाए, ताकि सीधा-सीधा किसानों को उसका लाभ मिल सके?

श्री शरद पवार: दो सवाल आए हैं, जिसमें इनका पहला सवाल है रिगार्डिंग इंटररेस्ट। कॅमर्शियल बैंकों के साथ इस बारे में बात जरूर हो गई है कि वे इंटरेस्ट को नीचे कहां तक ला सकते हैं। इसके बारे में आर०बी०आई० के साथ जो उनकी बात हुई है, उसमें ब्याज दर 9 परसेंट के आसपास रखने

की बात कॅमर्शियल बैंकों ने स्वीकार की है। नाबार्ड से लेकर देश के स्टेट कोऑपरेटिव बैंकों के साथ हम लोगों ने बात की है, मगर कोऑपरेटिव बैंक अभी तक इसको स्वीकार करने को तैयार नहीं हैं क्योंकि उनका यह कहना है कि उनके बैंकों में जो डिपोजिट्स हैं, उन पर उन्होंने इससे पहले जो इन्टरेस्ट दिया है, वह 12 या 13 परसेंट तक दिया है और जब तक कोई डिपोजिट मैच्योर नहीं होता, तब तक उनकी यह जिम्मेदारी है, जिसे वे छोड़ तो नहीं सकते। इसलिए आप कोऑपरेटिव बैंक इसमें रेट कम करने के लिए तैयार नहीं हैं। मगर कोऑपरेटिव बैंक ने दूसरा एक्शन अभी ले लिया है कि इसके बाद जितने डिपोजिट उन्होंने स्वीकार किये, उन पर वे 8 परसेंट से ज्यादा इंटरेस्ट नहीं देते क्योंकि इसके बाद वे किसानों को भी कम इंटरेस्ट पर ऋण देने की उनकी शक्ति हो जाएगी, ताकत हो जाएगी और मुझे विश्वास है कि साल-दो-साल में कोऑपरेटिव बैंक भी इस लाईन में आएंगे और हम इनके साथ इस पर कंटीन्यूअसली बातचीत करते हैं। जहां तक इंश्योरेंस की बात है, तो आज इंश्योरेंस का जो सिस्टम है, इसके बारे में जगह-जगह से शिकायतें आती हैं। इसलिए एक ग्रुप अपोइन्ट किया था। ज्वाइंट ग्रुप बनाकर, इसमें क्या-क्या सुधार कर सकते हैं, इस बारे में डिटेल में बात हो गई है। इस ज्वाइंट ग्रुप की रिपोर्ट 20 दिसम्बर को सरकार के पास आई है। इस पर हम अभी फाइनल डिसीजन लेने वाले हैं। इससे पहले हम यह जानना चाहते थे कि राज्य सरकार की इस बारे में क्या सूचना है, इसलिए सभी मुख्य मंत्रियों को इस बारे में लिखा था। उनकी कुछ सूचना हमारे पास आई है। इसे मद्देनजर रखते हुए इस पर फाइनल डिसीजन लिया जाएगा। इस डिसीजन में ज्यादा ध्यान इस बात पर दिया जाएगा कि विलेज एज ए यूनिट, जब तक हम विलेज एज ए यूनिट स्वीकार नहीं करते तब तक हम किसानों को राहत नहीं दे सकते, इसलिए इस पर ज्यादा ध्यान दिया है। मुझे विश्वास है कि इस पर सरकार जल्दी ही अंतिम निर्णय लेगी।

SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY: Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister about the credit being provided to the farmers. What is the percentage of credit being provided to the small and marginal farmers during the past three years? My specific question is regarding Andhra Pradesh. We met you and submitted a report also wherein it was stated that about 2500 farmers have committed suicide during the last ten months. On an average, ten people are committing suicide in Andhra Pradesh. What are the suggestions and recommendations made by Dr. M.S. Swaminathan in this regard, more particularly, with regard to Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka?

SHRI SHARAD PAWAR: Regarding credit, as I had already said, the decision has been taken to enhance agricultural credit from Rs. 80,000 crores to Rs. 105, 000 crores. This was for the year 2004-05. This year, it will reach nearly Rs. 108,500 crores; that is, a hike to over 30 per cent.

I have myself, at my level, called a meeting of practically each and every bank of this country. We had discussions and we are having a review, practically every three months, as to what percentage of credit is being provided to the small and marginal farmers, and, I must say, the result is, by and large, satisfactory. The commitments made by the hon. Finance Minister have been executed by most of the banks. Still, I am not happy, because a sizeable section is still away from the credit network. We need to find some solution and resolve these issues.

Regarding the specific case of Andhra Pradesh, it is true that the hon. Member, along with his colleagues, has given details of the situation in Andhra Pradesh. In fact, a Commission was appointed, and one of the reasons for appointment of this Commission was to go into the details of the issue of suicides. They have given certain reasons and they are basically, crop failure, credit burden, non-payment of loans taken from informal sources and high rates of interest. These are the reasons which have been ultimately communicated by Dr. Swaminathan. Hon. Member is also fully aware about that and we are taken a number of steps in this regard.

DR. BIMAL JALAN: Mr. Chairman, Sir, obviously, this is a very important issue. The question that I have for the hon. Minister is, have we made a distinction in working out an Action Programme for two completely different sets of issues? One of them should be for the medium-term or the long-term issues relating to increasing agricultural productivity, agricultural production. All of us know that since about 1993-94, that is, in the last ten years, our agricultural growth has been lower. Credit availability and all the other things are long-term issues. There is a very immediate, short-term issue, which is that of suicide, of distress. You need an Action Programme that is completely different to handle certain problems, for example, when there is failure of rains, when there are suicides, when there is crop failure, etc. So, we need an Action Programme for that which is different, an Action Programme, which is more medium-term oriented. I wonder if we are working on two separate Action Programmes to handle these two different kinds of issues in the farming area.

SHRI SHARAD PAWAR: Sir, some of the States, in fact, have taken a lot of interest in resolving the immediate issues. Especially, States like Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Punjab have taken a series of decisions and they have given a number of concessions to the farming community

regarding the rates of interest, rescheduling of loans and concessions and facilities in the supply of electricity, power to the farming community. These decisions are taken essentially by the State Governments. Whatever decisions we would like to take here on the recommendations of Dr. Swaminathan would essentially constitute the long-term policy. But certain decisions have already been taken, as I have already disclosed in this House, and certain issues are still pending with us.

Food Parks

*244. SHRI SUDARSHAN AKARAPU: Will the Minister of FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRIES be pleased to state:

(a) the total number of Food Parks set up in the country, State-wise, as on 31st December, 2004;

(b) whether adequate infrastructure facilities have been made available to these Parks;

(c) the number of new Food Parks proposed to be set up during the current financial year in each State; and

(d) total amount sanctioned under the scheme?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRIES (SHRI SUBODH KANT SAHAY): (a) to (d) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) to (d) The requisite information about food parks sanctioned in the country State-wise as on 31st December, 2004 is annexed as Statement-I (*See* below). Government does not set up food parks on its own. However, in order to provide infrastructural facilities and make food processing units more cost-competitive, financial assistance @ 25 per cent for general and 33.33 per cent for difficult areas subject to maximum of Rs. 4.00 crores is sanctioned for establishment of food parks which provide common facilities such as power supply, water supply, cold storage, warehousing facilities, effluent treatment plant, food testing and analytical laboratories,common processing facilities etc. This assistance can be provided to Government, Cooperative, Private entities who come forward with a viable proposal. In the current financial year, two food parks have been sanctioned for